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400 AND COUNTING: DJOKOVIC CREATES ANOTHER HISTORY

On a dramatic Saturday, Jannik Sinner survived heat to advance, while Serb former World No 1 Novak Djokovic became the first man to win 400 Grand Slam matches. Djokovic, chasing a record 25th Major, saw off Netherlands' Botic van Zandschulp 6-3, 6-4, 7-6(4). The 10-time winner at Melbourne Park hasn't won a Slam since 2023 but he's feeling fresh and injury free P15

SC judge criticises executive influence in judge's transfer

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

A sitting judge of the Supreme Court publicly criticising its collegium that appoints and transfers judges to the higher judiciary is decidedly rare. However, Justice Ujjal Bhuyan on Saturday stuck his neck out by questioning a decision of the collegium to transfer a high court judge at the request of the Central government.

Observing that the executive has absolutely no say in the matter of transfer and postings of judges, Justice Bhuyan made the larger point that judges should not be seen as bending over backwards to justify denial of liberty or human rights. He warned that "if we lose our credibility, nothing will be left of the judiciary."

The Central government can have no say in the matter of transfer and posting of High Court Judges... It is within the exclusive domain of the judiciary

Justice Ujjal Bhuyan

Justice Bhuyan made the point while delivering the G V Pandit memorial lecture on "Constitutional Morality and Democratic Governance" at ILS Law College, Pune.

"When the collegium records that the transfer of a high court judge was being made at the request of the Central government, it reveals a striking intrusion of executive influence into what is constitutionally supposed to be an independent process," he asserted.

In October last year, the collegium headed by the then Chief Justice of India B R Gavai had revised its initial proposal to transfer Justice Atul Sreedharan from the Madhya Pradesh High Court to the Chhattisgarh High Court, recommending instead his transfer to the Allahabad High Court. The collegium said the change was made following a government request.

In Chhattisgarh, Justice Sreedharan would have joined the High Court collegium, whereas in Allahabad his seniority would be much lower. The decision drew criticism due to his reputation as an independent judge. Earlier, Justice Sreedharan had taken suo motu action against a Madhya Pradesh minister for remarks against a serving female Colonel.

Justice Bhuyan, without naming Justice Sreedharan questioned the reason for his transfer from one HC to another, just because he had passed certain inconvenient orders against the government. "Does it not affect the independence of the judiciary?" he asked.

Path open to lift 25% tariff: US

Russian oil import down, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent sees possibility of easing levy

PUSHPITA DEY @ New Delhi

A couple of booster shots have arrived just before the Union Budget, which could possibly lift the sentiments of the Indian economy further.

Even as the country is all set to sign a free trade deal with the European Union, which both sides see as the 'mother of all deals', the US hinted at a diplomatic path to lift the 25% additional import duty it levied on Indian goods after a "marked decline in India's imports of Russian oil in recent months".

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent hinted during a media interaction that the US administration could consider reducing the 50% tariff imposed on several sectors of Indian exports, as there has been a significant fall in imports of Russian oil in recent months.

The indication is being seen as hints of a potential easing of trade headwinds at a crucial juncture. Coming just a week ahead of the Union Budget 2026, the development has raised hopes of improved export prospects, stronger bilateral trade sentiment, and a more supportive global backdrop for India's growth narrative.

During his interaction with an American news outlet *Politico* at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Bessent said: "We put 25% tariffs on India for buying Russian oil. And the Indian purchases, by their refineries, of Russian oil have collapsed. That is a success." Bessent assured that the administration will be open to discussions to ease them. "The tariffs are still on. I would imagine there is a path to take them off."

US President Donald Trump announced a total of 50% tariff (including a 25% tariff due to imports of crude oil from Russia) on several Indian exports, including textile, apparel, carpets, gems and jewelleries from August-end. This additional tariff came as a penalty for buying Russian oil. According to Bessent, the tactic of pressuring India has worked as the import of crude oil from Russia has come down considerably in the last few months.

INDIA'S CRUDE IMPORTS

Month	Russia	US
Dec 2024	1,482	67
Jan 2025	1,674	293
Feb 2025	1,476	145
March 2025	1,868	289
Apr 2025	1,924	337
May 2025	1,851	298
June 2025	2,089	303
July 2025	1,591	364
Aug 2025	1,689	230
Sept 2025	1,614	207
Oct 2025	1,619	568
Nov 2025	1,836	451
Dec 2025	1,146	330

We put 25% tariffs on India for buying Russian oil. And Indian purchases of Russian oil have collapsed. I would imagine there is a path to take them off

Scott Bessent

Relief for exporters

Cuts to US tariffs and the FTA with EU will bring much respite to Indian exporters

T20 WC: B'desh out, Scotland in

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Chennai

AND just like that, the Asian bloc, the most powerful bloc in international cricket seems to be in tatters, at least for the time being. But there was no way out once Bangladesh stood their ground of not travelling to India so close to the T20 World Cup beginning from February 7. Though there have been withdrawals in the past, because of the passion involved in the sub-continent, this seems more high profile and talked-about. P15

EXPRESS READ

India votes against UN resolution on Iran

NEW DELHI: India voted against a resolution at the UNHRC condemning Iran's violent crackdown on recent protests and extending international investigative mandates. The resolution was adopted at the Council's 39th special session with 25 votes in favour, seven against and 14 abstentions. Besides India, China, Pakistan, Indonesia and Iraq voted against the measure P9

Eating honey? Most samples in South India untested

BOSKY KHANNA @Bengaluru

CONSUMERS in South India are at a health risk of consuming synthetic, adulterated or pesticide-ridden honey even as the demand for the nectar and its byproducts is rising for health and beauty reasons.

Far too few honey samples from southern states are coming up for testing under the National Beekeeping and Honey Mission – or Madhukranti, despite the rising number of honey-testing laboratories across India.

To take the quality of honey-testing a few notches higher, the ICAR-IIHR Bengaluru is working on creating methods to detect and trace levels of antibiotics and pesticides in honey. P6

Tea - A perfect Ingredient to Healthy Living
• A vitamin boost for you, with every sip
• Tea has antioxidants and fights germs like the Avengers
• Keeps your heart in the best of health
• Wards off the threat of Cancer-causing germs in your body
• Green Tea helps in preventing Esophageal (Throat) Cancer
• Shields your skin against UV exposure like a sun screen
• Minimizes chance of stroke
• A great stress reliever - makes you see the brighter side of life.
TEA BOARD INDIA
Ministry of Commerce & Industry
Department of Commerce
Government of India
Steps to Brewing Happiness
• Boil water in a vessel
• Add 3 grams of branded tea of your choice
• Place a lid on the vessel, let it brew for 2-3 minutes
• Add milk and sugar to taste
TEA
Pure Tea, Pure Vibes, Better Health
Quality Matters - Keep off Adulterated tea
• If a pinch of tea powder turns cold water red, that's adulterated tea
• Authentic tea when added to cold water will not dramatically turn it red
• Hence, always opt for Quality Tea
• Buying authentic and Genuine tea is also a great support to tea farmers, and a big barrier against adulteration
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